

THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE RENAISSANCE CENTER

Although the Renaissance Center is mainly known for its large collection of early printed books in Latin and English, its frequent visitors may have noticed that the Center also holds numerous manuscript leaves hanging on its walls. Of what the public may not be aware, however, is that the Center is also home to an excellent collection of manuscripts from Italy and Spain, which I had the privilege to catalogue for a recent NEH grant proposal. Among the manuscripts we find the *Book of the Condemnations of Archidona* (1593-1595), a collection of fines and trials, together with economic transactions, disputes over land and cattle, and records of the activity of civil servants and royal guards in the county of Archidona, Spain. From Spain the Center also holds the *Burgos Manuscript* (1510-1613), a collection of six different documents relating to the hamlet of Villarieza, adjacent to the city of Burgos, and relating to the brothers Antonio and Juan Quintanaduenas, the latter being the Alderman of the city. This manuscript is extremely important, not so much for the contents of its documents, two of which relate to the claim of heraldry for the brothers, but because the piece of parchment used to bind the six documents together is a unique copy of an apostolic Bull dating from 1517.

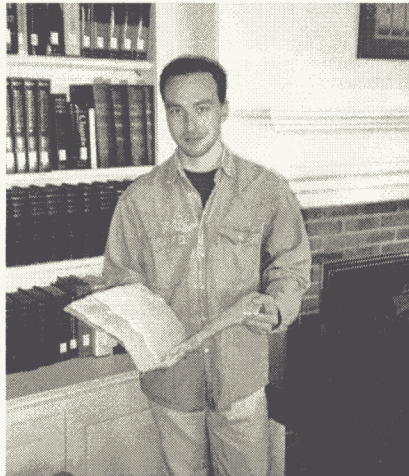
The manuscript labeled *Memorial de Chumacero, Riposta y Replica* is a collection of three letters written in 1634-1635. The first is a memorial letter from His Majesty the Catholic King Phillip IV presented to Pope Urban VIII by Fray Domingo Pimentel, Bishop of Cordoba, and Juan Chumacero y Carrillo, claiming that the excessive taxes on the Spanish Crown were keeping the country from defeating the enemies of Christendom. The second letter is the response given by Monsignor Miraldi, denying the petition of the King of Spain, and the third document is the angry reply of Pimentel and Chumacero to the Pope's denial. The fourth manuscript, the *Story of the End of the World, not of When but of How it will Finish*, is an unedited and unpublished work written in the last quarter of the seventeenth century by the mysterious priest Americo da Firenze, of whom nothing is known. The book, in Italian and Latin, was written with utmost attention to detail. Although virtually unreadable due to the author's calligraphy and text display, it is filled with countless annotations from the bible and the scriptures,

additions to the passages, and multiple corrections. The narrated story retells the signs of the apocalypse according to the bible, the Fathers of the church and pagan legends: the flight of the Pope from Rome, the coming of the Antichrist, the destruction of the city of Rome by fire, the birth of the New Jerusalem, the rule of the Antichrist in Babylon, the cries from the temple of Jerusalem, the conversion of the Jews to Christianity, the coming of Enoch and Elias, the destruction of Jerusalem by an earthquake, the resurrection of the dead, and the Final Judgment.

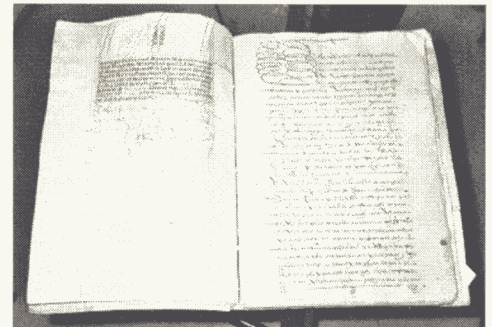
The jewel of the collection, however, is the manuscript labeled *Santa Clara de Alcozer*, written by the Clarian nuns of the Royal Convent of Santa Clara de Alcozer (Guadalajara) over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The convent, which was of extraordinary importance in medieval Spain, was founded by Mayor Guillén de Guzmán in 1260, almost five decades after Santa Clara de Asís founded the order of the clarissan nuns. It was popularly known from its foundation as the convent of Santa Clara de Alcozer, but the fact that it was erected on the term of San Miguel caused the convent often to be referred to as "convent of St. Michael" until the year of 1373 when, having all the nuns moved to the village of Alcozer, the convent retained its original name. Particularly interesting is the fact that the manuscript was very likely bound before it was written, at least in its later stages of composition. This is evidenced by the fact that the manuscript was used to keep records of donations, "juros," sales, and other economic transaction of the convent, and most folios at the end of each section were left blank. Furthermore, the different hands we find overlapping in each section are also proof that the manuscript is not the work of one single author, but rather the combined effort of several scribes to keep the records in each separate section.

The founder was the daughter of don Nuño Guillén de Guzmán and doña María González, and sister of don Pedro Núñez de Guzmán, who was "Adelantado Mayor de Castilla." Doña Mayor gave King Alfonso X of León a daughter, Beatriz, who was to become Queen of Portugal and later took possession of the convent, and possibly two other children, don Martín Alfonso, who was abbot of Valladolid, and doña Urraca Alfonso, who probably was the abbess of the convent in the last years of the thirteenth century. When Doña Mayor died, her daughter Beatriz inherited the convent, which for a long time held the tomb of King Alfonso X, and at her death, her daughter, the Infanta doña Blanca, inherited it. The convent, Romanesque in construction, was one of the most important centers of ecclesiastic and monarchic activity, thus the varied references to donations from all monarchs of Spain, whatever the historical period, including Alfonso X, Enrique II, Juana, Fernando e Isabel, Sancho IV and the Infanta doña Blanca. There are also references to Juan de Burgos, Juan Ysidro Ballesteros, and Francisco de Olivares. In 1936, however, the Spanish Civil War forced the nuns to seek refuge in the monastery of Calabazanos (Segovia) from which they never returned. The convent of Santa Clara de Alcozer is, today, in ruins.

-- David Arbesú Fernández



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Memorial de Chumacero, Riposta y Replica



The Burgos Manuscript